

LIFE-BLIND LIBERALISM AND LIFE GROUNDED DEMOCRACY

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Summary

The chapter examines the development, in theory and practice, of liberal democracy from a life-grounded perspective. The chapter traces the development to a conflict between the rights ground and the needs ground of social morality. The liberal rights ground has traditionally subordinated access to need-satisfying resources to those with the ability of pay for them. The needs ground, by contrast, resisted the life-destructive effects of liberal property rights. Liberal democracy is the outcome of the democratization of liberal society which, in its classical form, was neither democratic nor life-grounded. The real gains of liberal democracy from the standpoint of the interests of life have been eroded by the gains of a new corporate rights ground which is at the root of the globalization of capitalist market dynamics. The chapter concludes with an overview of life-grounded responses to these new threats.

1. Introduction

One can think of a democratic society as a whole composed of individual wholes. Individuals are integral centers of need and capacity for physical and cognitive activity defined by their potential to create their life according to a self-given project. Individuals are, at the same time, interdependent social beings who can achieve nothing meaningful outside of social institutions designed and governed for the sake of the well-being of the people whose commitment sustains them. Thus there is an intrinsic link between the well-being of people and democratic institutions. Only when people themselves can participate in the design, governance, and functioning of major social institutions can they be said to enjoy human well-being, for only then is their highest potential realized on the social level of being. Unlike undemocratic societies, the institutions of a democratic society are not oppressive burdens to be borne by the

citizens but the objective expression of their freedom. The social whole (institutions) exists for the good of the individual's wholes, rather than the individuals existing for the sake of the perpetuation of the institutions and the private good of the class that controls them.

If democratic freedom entails that the citizens of a democratic society are collectively self-determining in the ultimate interest of their individual well-being, then it follows that all major social institutions must ultimately be governed by their universal life-interest in need-satisfaction and capacity development. Otherwise, the material conditions of their defining potential for freedom are left outside of their collective power, and their actuality would be in contradiction with their human potentiality. More concretely, if the economic dynamics of a putatively democratic society are not subordinated to the universal life-interests of the citizens, but are instead allowed to operate 'free' of democratic power solely according to the goal of their own self-expansion as measured by the growth of money-profits, then the freedom of the citizens of that society must inevitably be in contradiction to the freedom of those economic dynamics. Since their freedom depends upon collective life-grounded use of natural and social wealth in the service of their self-given projects, while the 'freedom' of the economic system depends upon the subordination of all needs and capacities to its overriding interest in the growth of money, the two freedoms cannot coexist in any stable configuration but must be in constant opposition until one or the other is victorious. Those contemporary societies called liberal-democratic manifest this contradiction.

The contradiction is essentially social. As noted above, a society that claims to be democratic implies by this claim that the universal life-interests of its citizens in need-satisfaction and capacity development govern major social institutions, including, especially, the economic system. Actual societies, however, allow private and exclusive corporate control over the sources and institutions of need-satisfying and life-engendering wealth. Governments willingly acquiesce in the de-regulation of economic systems and brow-beat their citizens into accepting the reduction of their life-activity to whatever the 'market decides.' In so doing these governments prove that it is not collective power and free thought that determine the course of public policy and individual life, but corporate property rights that rule. Collective self-determination is trumped by market mechanisms dominated by corporate right; the price of freedom, everyone is told, is to 'let the market decide' every problem of substance. But to let a reified power decide issues of substance is by definition not to decide for ourselves. If we are not deciding those crucial issues for ourselves then we do not live in a self-determining society. If we do not live in a self-determining society we do not live in a democratic society.

In order to understand the grounds for this conclusion a conceptual and historical investigation of the development of the societies which are called democratic is necessary. The first section of this investigation will spell out the necessary conceptual framework of a critical understanding of democratic society. The second section will chart the contradictory sources of liberal-democratic capitalist society. The third will explain conceptually the contradiction between liberal capitalism and democracy and disclose the systematic inadequacy of contemporary liberal-democratic philosophy. The

fourth will return to the practical level and demonstrate the antithetical relationship between capitalist globalization and democracy. Finally, the fifth section will identify and explain the sources of life-grounded democratic development today.

2. Conceptual Framework: Value Systems and Grounds of Social Morality

The dominant traditions in liberal ethical and political philosophy treat values as the abstract products of atomistic egos reasoning self-interestedly. What this approach cannot explain is, on the one hand, the uniformity of values between people in given social formations and, on the other hand, the opposition between values that emerges in periods of social conflict and transformation. If we are to explain normative continuity and conflict a deeper and more systematic approach to the origin of values is necessary. Values in general we can define as reasons or goods that orient conscious action. Their foundation is not the atomic ego but rather fundamental interests in relation to objects of significance that follow from different social positions in given social formations. Oppositions of value then follow from different interests in relation to different objects which attach to different social positions and point toward different social formations. To analyze values in this deep structural way is not to reduce human consciousness to a mere function of a system. Human beings can reflect upon and change the values that orient their actions, and, in the process develop and deepen definite value commitments. This social process of value transformation, however, is quite distinct from creating values *ex nihilo*.

To understand shared values on the basis of which given social formations reproduce themselves requires two distinct levels of analysis. At the level of society as a whole it is possible to determine the operation of a value system at work in its major institutions and, so long as it remains stable, anchored in the consciousness of the majority of its members. Value systems, in John McMurtry's definition, "connect together goods that are affirmed and bads that are repudiated as an integrated way of thinking and acting in the world." These value systems may be secular or religious and be explicated through apparently distinct philosophical theories. No matter what the stated ground or interpretation, however, no socially dominant value system will permit any affirmation of values that challenge its hegemony and the social interests that it serves.

Thus the function of a value system is to produce commitment in the body of citizens to living their lives in such a way that the society reproduces itself from generation to generation. In order for social reproduction to be successful, however, people must work together (at least unconsciously) to produce the goods and services that everyone needs in order to survive. At the decisive level of the socio-economic system one finds regulating normative principles that I call the 'ground of social morality.' I define a ground of social morality as the values that legitimate the production, distribution, and appropriation of life-sustaining resources in a given period. The ground of social morality in a stable society will always cohere with and never contradict the value system and the social interests it serves.

So far the argument has confined itself to the abstract form of value systems and grounds of social morality in order to make clear their structure and function. But actual value systems are distinguished from one another by their content, that is, by the actual

values which they affirm and the excluded others which they repudiate. The operative values of a given society are not a matter of indifference for human beings. On the contrary, the character and quality of individual life is largely determined by the values that people accept. Societies that one wants to call unfree or oppressive do not reproduce themselves simply by force of arms, but also because citizens, including those who suffer the worst of the oppression and unfreedom, accept them, at least over the short or medium term. Thus the essential normative questions that must be asked when the problem concerns judgments about a society's free or unfree character are: what is the content of its value system, what is its ground of social morality, and whose interests do both serve? When the society is unfree the general answer will always reveal that a non-living thing is valued over human life. The quality of a human life will be reduced to the quantitative increase in the non-living good. The value of the lives of self and other appear to be thereby determined by a substance outside of and independent of their needs and capabilities such that these true determinant of life value appear real only when exercised in relation to the non-living good. The non-living good appears to be a universal value, but critical philosophical analysis will always uncover, in the case of unfree societies, a particular class who, by virtue of its preponderant social power, is able to maximally satisfy its short-term interests at the expense of the universal life-interests of the whole.

Conflicts between value systems and grounds of social morality arise when those groups (always a majority) who suffer under the hegemony of what we can call, following McMurtry, life-blind systems of value awaken to the human interests grounded in their social-organic nature. 'Social-organic' nature is meant to stress the fact that human nature is framed but not determined by a fixed abstraction like our genetic code. The complex organic being of humanity cannot be understood outside of an examination of the socio-historical development which that being makes possible (in so far as it enables humans to think projectively and act creatively). This social-organic nature entails shared, universal interests in the basic conditions of life maintenance and the social and institutional conditions of comprehensive capacity development. A life-grounded value system always ensures that these shared universal interests are the ruling values. Life-blind systems, by contrast, invariably subordinate the conditions for the free development of self-determining human beings to the conditions for the self-expansion of the non-living substance they serve. Since these two systems of value are essentially opposed, periods of social conflict always follow the awakening of people to their shared life-interests, variously articulated as concrete struggles against different forms of oppression and exploitation. Unifying these struggles, but not always apparent to definite political movements, is the universal human value of free self-realization according to a self-given project. This value necessarily underlies concrete struggles as their explanatory normative ground. The interests of women in overcoming patriarchy, racial minorities in overcoming racism, workers in overcoming exploitations, gays and lesbians in overcoming homophobia, the disabled in overcoming exclusion from public spaces are all concretizations of the universal underlying interest of human life in the free, conscious development of its physical, cognitive, and affective capacities.

The following examination of the contradictory development of liberal-capitalist society will explain its evolution as a function of social conflict between two opposed value systems and two opposed grounds of social morality. The dominant value system of the

liberal-capitalist world is the value system of the global economy. Its essential principle is, in the words of McMurtry, “to multiply by ever more deregulation and new financial instruments the monetized circuits of power through which directive control of all the world’s means of existence increasingly pass.” Affirmed goods will all serve the growth of money for major corporate interests, repudiated bads will be anything that impedes this growth, regardless of whether the repudiated ‘bad’ is demonstrably linked to the growth of life. The corresponding ground of social morality is what I have called the liberal rights ground. It regards as legitimate modes of producing, distributing, and appropriating resources only those which are grounded in private and exclusive property rights. The sign of a legitimate property right is the ability to pay. The existence of a need without a corresponding right (ability to pay) means that the need will go unsatisfied. This value system and its corresponding ground of social morality together form the normative ground of liberal-capitalist society.

Interpreted from a life-grounded perspective a democratic society is antithetical to the ruling value system and ground of social morality today. To the extent that democratic elements exist within contemporary society they must be understood as the outcome of struggles against the ruling system of value and ground of social morality, not as following from them. The underlying principle of the manifold of democratic struggles and thus the base principle of any possible democratic society is: “[satisfaction] of life need ... for life-capacity and experience in more comprehensive enjoyment and expression.” The system of value that follows from this base principle is essentially democratic in so far as it puts the universal life-interests of citizens in charge of all major social institutions. At the level of economic institutions this value system entails the substitution of the needs-ground of social morality for the currently operative liberal-rights ground. Following McMurtry, I mean by ‘need’ an organic requirement of life such that failure to satisfy it results directly in harm to the organism in the form of impaired capacity. I call this ground of social morality needs-based in order to emphasize the contrast with the way in which need-satisfaction is subordinated to the ability to pay in actual liberal-capitalist societies. Of course, need-satisfaction is not an end in itself in a democratic society, but instrumental to the free development of consciously self-determining people. Given this relationship it follows that the mode of need-satisfaction must itself be organized freely. In other words, free beings must organize the institutions and practices of need-satisfaction themselves; they cannot be ‘freed’ from need by a totalitarian bureaucracy, even if it were possible to imagine a well-intentioned one. In order to understand this positive claim and the critique of actually existing society that it implies it is essential to look at the historical development of liberal-capitalist society from the perspective of its underlying value system and ground of social morality.

3. Property Rights versus Needs in the Development of Liberal Capitalism

The English Civil War (1640-60) represents the first modern society-wide conflict structured at a deep level by the contradiction between the rights ground of social morality and the needs ground of social morality. The conflict emerged in the context of a century long shift in the rural economy signified by the practice of enclosing common lands. Enclosing the common lands meant the displacement of peasant farmers and a growing crisis of peasant life. This radical break with tradition and the life-crisis it

produced for the peasantry, combined with the challenge to monarchical authority launched by the landed classes, gave rise to the modern conception of rights. In its origin it was, as Ronald Dworkin has famously defined it a “trump” against political and social interference in the strategic pursuit of private interests. Whereas modern egalitarian liberals like Dworkin want to emphasize how rights can be used to protect a sphere of private individual freedom from unjust state and social interference, its core function at the moment of its birth was the justification of exclusive private claims to control the productive and life-sustaining wealth of the nation and not the universal interests of everyone in having the space to think freely and live differently. As Barrington Moore Jr. argues, “the way in which [feudal obligations] disappeared, and who was to win and who was to lose by the change, became crucial political issues in every country that knew feudalism. In England the issues came to the surface early. There, long before Adam Smith, scattered groups of Englishmen living in the country began to accept self-interest and economic freedom as the basis of human society.” The struggle of these scattered groups to legitimate their seizure of the common lands and the subordination of agricultural production to the imperative of profit maximization is the true origin of the liberal rights ground of social morality and the liberal-capitalist it tries to justify.

The earliest formal evidence of this evolving ground of social morality is the 1628 Petition of Right. Here we see the first clear evidence of a new political theory grounded in the right to security of the person and private property. Since owning private property was assumed to be the condition of having an independent ‘person’ to protect, the assertion of this right was essentially the assertion of the demand to subordinate political, social, and economic power to the interests of the new landowning class. The property this class was interested in securing, against the crown from above and the peasantry from below, was not personal property for use, but productive property for privately profitable investment. The possession of personal property does not create a social crisis requiring new normative conceptions of legitimate ownership. Only the massive social crisis created by depriving the peasantry of the land it *needed* to survive could create such a crisis and a corresponding need for new modes of legitimation.

The manifest consequence of enclosure was the destruction of traditional life ways. Marx describes these consequences in a memorable passage. “The historical movement which changes producers into wage workers appears, on the one hand, as their emancipation from serfdom ... and this side alone exists for our bourgeois historians. But, on the other hand, these new freedmen became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production, and of all guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements. And the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.” Histories of blood and fire need to be rewritten in the language of new values, for the sake of the compliance of both victors and losers alike. Traditional obligations between landowner and peasant were destroyed by enclosure, so the new concept of exclusive and absolute rights to private property evolved to take their place.

John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government* is a paradigmatic case study of the evolution of the rights ground of social morality and the conflict it entails with a needs grounded social morality. What makes Locke’s work exemplary is the conscious effort

that he makes to justify an economic system that he acknowledges deprives others of what they need to survive. It is the clearest evidence of the anti-democratic and ultimately life-blind nature of the evolving liberal-capitalist world. Locke's treatise begins from a life-grounded interpretation of the state of nature. The state of nature is a peaceful world in which natural law rules. Appropriation of natural wealth is limited by two life-grounded precepts: take no more than you can use and leave as much and as good for others. God, Locke assumes, did not create the world so that its wealth could waste away in unused accumulations. Peace, therefore, is a function of a mode of appropriation limited by need and governed by use. It was obvious to Locke, however, that he did not live in such a world. His world had just emerged from forty years of conflict and was increasingly governed by men who, by driving others off the land, had accumulated vastly more than they could imagine using themselves. Locke knew that, and he knew that such a world contradicted his originally life-grounded theory of appropriation. In order to justify the actual world he altered his assumptions about God's intentions, about the meaning of 'use' and about the legitimate means of acquiring property.

In the state of nature the only means of legitimate acquisition was labor. Locke argues, however, that human beings have consented to the use of money. Once an economy has become monetized all life-grounded constraints on acquisition and appropriation are removed. Since the use of money has been 'agreed' to as a legitimate means of exchange property can be acquired without mixing one's labor with the object. Moreover, since money does not spoil and is of an unlimited quantity it escapes the life-grounded limits governing the accumulation of real resources. Together these changes spell the end of a life-grounded state of nature. Those with money are entitled to accumulate as much of anything (including other human beings as workers) as they can buy. Since property can be legitimately acquired through purchase and used to make money, appropriations of land beyond what can be immediately used are now possible. Finally, Locke qualifies his original contention that God gave the earth to humans in common for the sake of need satisfaction. It turns out that God did not give the earth to humans in common, but to the industrious gave the "right of inclosure" for the sake of 'improvement.' Locke can ignore the life-destructive consequences of this 'inclosure' because by 'improvement' Locke means 'more profitable,' not more need satisfying. In other words, a healthy economy is conceived of apart from the conditions of human health. As Wood notes, "the word 'improve' itself, in its original meaning, did not mean just 'make better' in a general sense but literally meant to do something for monetary profit, especially to cultivate land for profit." The legacy of capitalist improvement is contemporary 'development' projects that devastate local cultures, breed dependence and not self-sufficiency, but are regarded as 'good' because multinational corporations benefit. We can only understand this Orwellian inversion of meaning if it is set in an understanding of the normative foundation of the new economy: exclusive private property rights over universally needed resources.

These exclusive rights established class-based control over universally needed resources and created a framework within which a new, money grounded system of value could develop. While right from the beginning the idea of 'right' had anti-authoritarian implications in so far as it subordinated political power to the rule of law, one would be mistaken if one thereby concluded that the original liberal idea of right was democratic.

Democracy requires, in addition to the rule of law, the substantive rule of universal life interests over major social institutions, and especially the economy. Classical liberalism, however, was concerned with justifying a new mode of universal dependence on ‘market forces.’ As Wood again brilliantly explains, “this unique system of market dependence has specific systemic requirements and compulsions ... The imperatives of competition, accumulation, and profit-maximization ... mean that capitalism can and must constantly expand ... search out new markets, impose its imperatives on new territories and over new spheres of life, on all human beings and the natural environment.” Hence liberal-capitalist society rests upon a formal separation of political and economic power. So long as the economic sphere of society is allowed to operate free of political control it necessarily functions as an unregulated zone of coercive power. The subsequent universalization through which class-rights became citizenship rights did not, and cannot (as I will demonstrate) democratize *society*, even if it did universalize civil, political, and social rights.

As Wood makes clear, the system dynamics of capitalism necessitate its expansion into ever new spheres of activity and life. The instrumentalization of life and life-activity its expansion entails, however, must be justified. On the one hand this justification takes place through the belief that unconstrained self-interest produces optimal collective outcomes. At a deeper normative level, however, people must be convinced that accumulating money is the sole good of human life. Intrinsically related to the money-grounded value system is the rights-ground of social morality. Private property rights secure a zone of self-interest which rationally self-maximizing agents seek to protect and extend. The maximization of monetary returns within these zones of self-interest is treated as an irresistible incentive to expand them. That such expansion cannot go on forever, that in the process life-serving resources are appropriated for money-producing ends, that people are therefore need-deprived and reduced to mere instruments of the self-expanding system, and that gradually all of natural and human reality is brought under a life-blind value system goes unnoticed so long as the system is judged from within its own principles of justification.

The fact that the life-blind consequences of the capitalist economy cannot be understood from within its legitimating value system and ground of social morality means that democracy, as an essentially life-grounded social system, had to arise from an external and opposed system of value and ground of social morality. Given the facts that the enclosure movement was directly destructive of peasant lifeways, and that life resists its own destruction in the struggle to maintain connection with its sustaining grounds, it is unsurprising that the growth of capitalism spurred the growth of an oppositional system of value and an oppositional ground of social morality. The argument will explicate their structure and content by examining one of their first systematic formulations in the work of the ‘True Leveller’ theorist Gerrard Winstanley.

Winstanley gained ephemeral notoriety on April 1, 1649 when he and a small group of followers occupied and began cultivating unused land on St. George’s Hill in southern England. His Diggers, or True Levellers, based the legitimacy of their claim on their need for the land. This need, they argued, ‘trumped’ the private property right of the landowner. Since the land exists to satisfy human needs, they reasoned, and the landowner was not using it, the Digger’s use of the land was no harm to the legal owner.

The theory and practice of the Diggers clearly opposes the life-blind logic of private property rights with the life-grounded logic of need-satisfaction for the sake of capacity realization. To understand this claim fully it is important to examine the structure of Winstanley's theory.

Like Locke, Winstanley roots his argument in an interpretation of the Judeo-Christian creation myth. "In the beginning," he wrote, "the great Creator, reason, made the earth to be a treasury, to preserve beasts, birds, fishes, and man ... not one word was spoken in the beginning that one branch of mankind [the propertied] should rule over the other [the propertyless]." Interpreting Winstanley in a secular idiom one could say that he is arguing is that nature is essentially a system of life and life-support. Social practices that contradict this life-sustaining essence of nature are therefore irrational in a substantive sense, according to Winstanley. That is, the cause of scarcity and need-deprivation is not normally nature itself, but human greed. Only when some class of humans seizes control of major social institutions and uses them to protect massive accumulations of property far beyond the level of their own needs, does one observe pervasive need-deprivation. If social organization is the problem, then changes to social organization are the solution.

To be precise, then, the immediate cause of material suffering is irrational law. Behind irrational laws stands the power of the propertied class. To justify the suffering that their greed causes they appeal to their exclusive property right to appropriate for profit that which everyone needs for life. If one starts from nature as a rational system of life-support, however, a distinct needs ground of social morality appears. In a remarkable passage Winstanley's eccentric genius leads him to directly counterpose exclusive rights to human needs. He warns the landowners to "blame us not if we make stop of your and convert the wood to our own use, as *need* requires, it being our own, *equal* with him who calls himself lord ... and not his peculiar right.[emphasis added]. This warning contains in embryo the systematic normative opposition between the rights ground and the needs ground of social morality. Whereas liberal property rights are 'peculiar' (i.e., exclusive) needs are equal; whereas the exercise of property rights deprives others of what they need and therefore harms them, the exercise of the needs ground deprives no one of what they need (the Diggers will not take all the wood, but only as much as they need, leaving enough for the needs of the lord); whereas the institutionalization of the rights ground leaves human beings dependent on an unnatural power (money) the institutionalization of the needs ground would free people from artificial dependence and therefore satisfy the material conditions for a free society.

Winstanley thus posits as the material condition of a positively free, self-determining or democratic society collective control over fundamental resources. He does so not only because need-satisfaction is an instrumental condition of political participation, but also because he believes that there is an intrinsic link between the satisfaction of needs and the expression of those capacities that characterize a human life as free. Freedom for Winstanley is not, as it is for Locke and classical liberalism, the liberty to accumulate without political or social interference. On the contrary, freedom is the active realization of the defining capacities of living beings. As he argues, freedom is "a force flowing naturally through all creation" which "moves man and beasts in their actions, that causes grass, trees, corn and all plants to grow, ... and whatever a body does, it does it as

moved by this inner form.” Freedom is thus equal to self-activity in accordance with the essential capacities of living things. Since these capacities are the capacities of living things, they cannot develop unless constant connection is maintained between living beings and the resources that they need. Nature is thus not first and foremost a competitive system. Competition presupposes living things that can compete, which in turn presupposes a deeper interconnection between living things and the requirements of their continued existence. Human beings in particular depend not only upon natural but more directly upon the social environment. The modes according to which life-sustaining human interconnection are organized decide who will live and who will die, who will rule and who will serve, whose capacities will be developed and whose will be destroyed. Power over life and death is really ultimate power. For humans, to control the resources that everyone needs to survive is to have ultimate power. If this ultimate power is in the hands of a particular class or ruling group, then those who lack it are fundamentally unfree. In liberal-capitalist society this ultimate power is in the hands of the class that controls the multinational corporations which control most of the world’s productive wealth. The appropriation of the world’s productive wealth is protected by trade and foreign investment law and thus legitimate from the perspective of this society’s legal institutions. Like the English peasant in the seventeenth century so today the majority of the world’s population is witnessing the enclosure of the global commons by a life-blind value system. Winstanley’s brilliant critique of the life-blind implications of classical liberal rights thus helps us understand at a deep normative level the life-blind nature of the analogous corporate rights.

Before moving further a recapitulation of the key points is in order. The classical liberal conception of right was an exclusive claim the essential function of which was the legitimation of the private control over universally needed resources. It follows from this system of private right that those without property are systematically dependent upon the state of market forces for their survival. If people are systematically dependent upon a dynamic which subordinates the satisfaction of their needs to its own growth and expansion, the material conditions of their freedom are not met. Such a society is not, judged from the standpoint of human need and capacity, free. On the contrary, the majority of citizens find that the power of life and death, flourishing or failure, is outside of their individual or collective control. A democratic society, by contrast, is democratic to the precise extent that its major social institutions are governed by the universal life-interests of everyone and institutionalized and codified through the reasoned deliberations of citizens and their freely chosen and accountable representatives.

The struggle for democracy has been and remains a life-grounded struggle to govern major social institutions according to the needs-ground of social morality in the interests of ensuring that the material conditions of active, positive, human freedom are met. Those material conditions cannot be met in societies in which the economic system is assumed to function best only when it is not held democratically accountable, that is, where a healthy economy is measured solely by the growth of money profit in complete abstraction from and indifference to the real condition and quality of life of the citizens. Yet that is exactly how economic health is understood in contemporary liberal capitalist society. Freedom is thus interpreted not in terms of the degree to which citizens collectively govern society as a whole, but only as a measure of non-interference in

‘private’ affairs. Far from being identical then, the liberal and the democratic meanings of human freedom are opposed at the level of their material conditions. The legal conditions of liberal freedom (non-interferences in ‘private’ affairs), contradict the social conditions of democratic freedom (life-grounded governance over all major social institutions) when ‘private’ is interpreted (as it has always been interpreted by all permutations of liberal theory) to include the economic system.

The best external support for this conclusion comes from nineteenth century liberalism itself. Whereas contemporary liberals have reinterpreted democracy to temper its socially radical implications and thus subordinate it to liberal values, nineteenth century liberals, facing more determined, radical, life-grounded struggles identified democracy with the latter and argued that it was antithetical to liberalism. Consider for example the claim of liberal historian William Lecky. In a tone reminiscent of de Tocqueville he mused that “the day will come when it will appear one of the strangest facts in the history of human folly that such a theory [democracy] was regarded as liberal and progressive.” Democracy and liberalism are essentially incompatible, he believed, because the former demands what the latter cannot cede: collective control over the productive wealth of society. Were liberalism to cede control over productive wealth the capitalist market economy, and thus liberal society, would be brought to an end.

Lecky paints the opposition in terms of the opposition between an individualistic and a mass society. In so doing, however, he must ignore the material conditions of *individuation*. When workers fought to regulate their workplaces, when the poor fought for means of subsistence, when the sick fought for access to health care, when the uneducated fought for education, when women fought for control over their bodies, when the racially enslaved fought for their emancipation, they were fighting to secure the social conditions in which they could *make themselves unique individuals*. Liberal capitalism purchases lifestyles for the rich and famous at the expense of reducing everyone else to fungible inputs into the productive system. Genuine individuality is not a commodity for purchase but a result of unique modes of thinking and acting. But those unique modes of thinking and acting have definite material conditions. A society that values *free individuation* must ensure that its citizens are free to individuate themselves. Where life-activity is always in the service of the ruling money monovalue, individuality of a substantive form will generally be absent. In the final two sections I will spell out more fully the material conditions of democratic individuality. At this point a more systematic examination of the democratic limitations of the contemporary liberal-democracy is necessary.

4. What Liberal Democracy Leaves Out

The practice of democracy is conceptually linked to securing the social grounds of collective and individual self-determination. Human beings are interdependent and cannot determine their individual life-projects freely outside of definite social institutions. Unless those social institutions are governed by the shared life-interests of the individual citizens those same individual citizens cannot freely determine their lives. Democracy therefore presupposes a circular relationship between individual and collective self-determination. A democratic social order is one in which all major social institutions are governed by the shared-life interests of citizens as articulated by those

citizens through their representatives in the service of the overriding goal of freeing individual life-projects from the arbitrary constraints of private power and reified institutional dynamics. The main barrier to democracy today is the private power that stands behind the global capitalist market and the reified dynamics generated by the market the global effects of which entail the reduction of life forms and life activity to mere instrumental factors in the system's blind self-expansion.

Nevertheless, actually existing liberal-capitalist societies regularly justify themselves as democratic. Either their official spokespeople are out and out lying about the true nature of liberal-capitalism or they have emptied the idea of 'democracy' of all social content having to do with the material conditions of free self-activity. While it is certainly the case that the rulers and bought intellectuals of liberal-capitalism regularly practice systematic distortion of the essential nature of the system, it would be false to conclude that there is nothing whatsoever democratic about liberal capitalism. In the sense in which it describes a real aspect of liberal-capitalist societies, 'democracy' refers to the constitutionally enshrined rights of citizenship, and especially the civil rights that protect the person and the political rights that permit limited forms of participation in the shaping of public policy. Importantly, the most progressive existing schedules of rights also include certain 'social' or 'positive' rights to limited means of need satisfaction (education, basic means of subsistence, health care). These social rights are the outcome of centuries of needs-grounded social struggles and thus represent historic victories of the need-deprived and oppressed. These life-grounded elements, nevertheless, have not at all impeded globalization and indeed have faced severe cutbacks everywhere they are known. Likewise, the essential right of adult citizens to participate in the political affairs of the state through standing for office or voting has not been sufficient to solving the deep democratic problem of ensuring that the universal life-interests of the citizens are the foundation of and the goal towards which economic activity is oriented. In short, the democratic elements of liberal-capitalist society, while real, are insufficient to overcome the structurally undemocratic values and dynamics of the globalized economy.

The historical development of liberal *democracy* out of liberal-capitalism reveals that all democratic advances (institutional changes through which citizens gained more control over the conditions of their existence and became correspondingly more self-active) have taken the form of subordinating resource use and institutional design to capacity-enabling and need-satisfying ends. Every concession to democracy thus far, however, has never ceded *determining* control over the economic institutions and dynamics typical of the capitalist market. Stalinism claimed to have overcome this capitalist limit to democracy, but proved itself almost immediately to be essentially opposed to the shared life-interests of people and instead governed by the twin goals of rapid industrialization and military competition. In the east or west, then, the struggle for democracy has always been checked precisely where a victory would make the greatest difference. Since Stalinism is no longer a reality political philosophy today must concentrate on the democratic limitations of actually existing liberal-democracy.

The fundamental democratic limitation today is the line which separates the political power to vote and argue from the economic power to control life-sustaining resources. Limited forms of political participation have been extended universally to adult citizens

without this concession enabling citizens to develop new institutions through which they could exercise determining control over economic dynamics. In short, citizenship has never included the collective power to democratically steer the economy along courses that would serve the interests of need-satisfaction and capacity development. As Ellen Wood explains, “the historical presupposition of [liberal-democratic] citizenship was the devaluation of the political sphere, the new relation between the economic and the political which had reduced the salience of citizenship and transferred some of its formerly exclusive powers to the purely economic domain of private property and the market, where purely economic advantage takes the place of juridical privilege and political monopoly.” Failure to understand the undemocratic implications of the social grounds of liberal citizenship bedevils even the most sophisticated theories of liberal-democracy today. In order to understand as precisely as possible what those limitations are, let me turn to a critique of the recent democratic theory of Jurgen Habermas. While deeply insightful and erudite, Habermas, as I will demonstrate, ends up with a self-contradictory understanding of democracy incapable of checking the undemocratic powers his own understanding of globalization identifies.

The essential problem with Habermas’ reconstruction of the foundations of liberal-democracy is that he fails to understand the independent role that needs-grounded struggles have played in the development of liberal-democracy. As a result he fails to see the depth opposition between the classical liberal value of exclusive property rights and the life-grounded value of collective control over universally needed natural and social resources. Instead of this depth opposition he focuses on the real but comparatively superficial opposition between what he calls the liberal value of ‘human rights’ and the republican value of popular rule. Liberalism, he rightly contends, was historically suspicious of republican demands for popular rule because these could transgress the abstract individual’s right to strategically pursue his own interests. Hence liberalism is understood as a political theory that asserts the primacy of right over the collective value of self-determination. The democratization of liberalism proceeded via the progressive universalization of originally exclusive rights. Habermas thus argues that the republican value of self-determination was institutionalized through a system of legitimate law anchored in inviolable constitutional guarantees of private autonomy. Those inviolable guarantees, (rights), in order be the rights of citizens of a democracy, cannot be understood as the natural rights of atomistic individuals but rather as the mutual rights that citizens accord each other (public autonomy). A legitimate legal system of a democratic society is one in which rational citizens can agree to abide by the law because they know and accept the law’s reasons, and they know these reasons because they themselves have participated in the law’s formulation. Popular sovereignty is thus a function of citizens exercising their political rights to contribute to the formulation of legitimate law. As he argues, “at a *conceptual level* rights do not immediately refer to atomistic and estranged individuals who are possessively set against one another. On the contrary, as elements of a legal order they presuppose collaboration amongst subjects who recognize one another, in their reciprocally related rights and duties, as free and equal citizens. This mutual recognition is constitutive for a legal order from which actionable rights are derived.” Rights structure a democratic community of citizens, he believes, and not, as in classical liberalism, merely frame the competitive struggles of atomistic individuals.

On the one hand, Habermas is correct. Rights *became* the legal framework making possible public participation in the civic life of the nation. This development did not occur because of an immanent universal logic implicit in the concept of right itself, however, but because, (as I argued in the first section), needs-grounded struggles were provoked by the social consequences (enclosure, exclusion of workers, women, minorities from social and political power) of the classical liberal institutionalization of the rights ground of social morality. The consequences of Habermas' failure to understand the contribution of an independent needs-ground of social morality, are far-reaching. This failure causes him to accept without question social rights as sufficient material conditions for the free exercise of political power and the free exercise of political power as necessarily limited to debates between citizens within the public sphere over matters of shared concern. As he argues, "the public sphere is a warning system with sensors that, though unspecialized, are sensitive throughout society. From the perspective of democratic theory, the public sphere must, in addition, amplify the pressure of problems but also convincingly and *influentially* thematize them, furnish them with possible solutions, and dramatize them in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes." However important these pressurizing and thematizing roles are, they are not the same as the democratically effective exercise of collective power over major social institutions, including, especially, economic institutions. Habermas, however, is unconcerned by the difference between informal pressure on parliamentary bodies and democratically effective power over all major social institutions because he believes that social institutions in general and economic dynamics in particular cannot be democratized.

Habermas treats the economic system as a zone of 'norm free sociality.' As a consequence, he rules out a priori the possibility of deep structural normative conflict between the goals of economic production and the goals of free human existence. In the economy Habermas sees only a system of efficient coordination of activity that uses money only as a 'steering medium.' This system can become a threat to democracy not because it operates according to a life-blind system of value, but because its purportedly 'value-free' dynamics spill over and 'colonize' the sphere of communicatively steered interaction that he calls the lifeworld. Colonization effects have intensified under conditions of globalization and now threaten to undermine the conditions of social solidarity by creating underclasses permanently excluded by poverty from civic life. Habermas, however, does not understand these undemocratic effects as the necessary implications of a life-blind value system but rather as the contingent effects of an otherwise efficient mode of production.

As a result, Habermas believes that the globalized capitalist economy, if properly limited to the production of goods and services, is a condition of, rather than systemic barrier to, democracy. As he argues, "complex societies cannot reproduce themselves if they do not leave the logic of an economy that regulates itself through the market intact." But he fails to note that what counts as a 'good' or a 'service' in this economy is anything that can produce a profit for a market agent, regardless of its effects on the health and freedom of human and planetary life. A nuclear missile is, literally, a 'good' in the actual economy because it is profitable to produce it. The political consequence of Habermas' failure to understand the value-system according to which the economic system is steered is that he warns democratic movements to *not* challenge the formal

separation of economic from political power that shields the life-blind value system from being exposed and transformed. As he says, “democratic movements emerging from civil society must give up holistic aspirations to a self-organizing society.” As a warning against fantasies of the possibility of immediate revolutionary redemption from capitalism this is certainly sound advice. But as ruling out by sociological fiat the possibility of long-term methods of re-appropriating privatized life-resources it would be destructive of the possibility of deepening democratic society. Worse, it would be to leave intact just those destructive forces that Habermas himself acknowledges the globalization of the capitalist market unleashes. Despite Habermas’ extraordinary erudition and the contribution he has made to understanding the relationship between individual rights and collective democratic power, his systematic democratic theory ends up contradicting the essential value of human freedom that motivates it.

This conclusion applies in general to liberal-democratic theory today. Unfortunately, just at the time when critical intelligence is needed most to expose the life-blind nature of the ruling value system today social and political philosophy has grown almost universally accomodationist. That is, rather than expose social contradictions social and political philosophy councils the reconciliation of old dreams of a fully democratic society with the existing institutions and limitations of the given social order. The reconciliation takes the form of limiting demands to the expansion of rights in abstraction from any depth critique of the historical connection between rights and the expansion of the capitalist economy and thus their historically demonstrated inability to check the subordination of the value of human life to a mere instrument of economic growth.

As argued above, social rights to subsistence income, education, health care, etc., are life-grounded elements of an otherwise life-blind value system and institutional order. Because, however, they also serve to protect the life-blind institutions from further transformation as much as to satisfy needs, their reality from the perspective of the people who rely upon them is at best contradictory. They are invariably bureaucratic and dependence maintaining. As opposed to satisfying needs in a capacity-enabling and life-enriching way, freeing the person for expanded ranges of self-activity, the institutions of the welfare state keep people alive without satisfying the essential underlying need for self-determination. They are real democratic achievements, but achievements which presuppose the life-blind value system underlying the globalized economy. As Gary Teeple argues in relation to the most elaborate schedule of rights, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), “what the UDHR does is enunciate the principles that arise from the conflicts that characterize civil society and underlies the relations between state and civil society. It constitutes the evolving ethical code of modern capitalism, in which is guaranteed the primacy of the economic by declaring individual (and by extension, corporate) rights as inherent, inalienable, and universal.” While the liberal rights ground of social morality has evolved, it nevertheless leaves out the essential condition of a democratic society: the governance of all social institutions and economic processes according to the universal life-interests of people. In the absence of that condition being satisfied the scope of legitimate political power is too restricted; citizens deliberating in the public sphere lack the right to impose life-grounded governance over economic dynamics operative on the global level.

At the deepest level, then, liberal-democracy is premised upon the formal separation of economic and political power. This formal separation of powers does make room for democracy, but democracy limited to political institutions and the public sphere assumed (even by liberal-democracy's most intelligent defenders) to be incompetent in the steering of economic life. Hence at the material level collective life is left hostage to the life-blind value of money. The evolution of the liberal rights ground embraces need in the form of social rights, but those rights, as I have argued, are in essence designed to impede the emergence of more deeply democratic social movements. A rights-grounded social morality, even one that bases itself in the universal idea of human rights, does not call into question, but only asserts a moral equivalence with, corporate rights. The victor in the moral competition between them is always going to be corporate rights so long as the competition is carried out within social structures that presuppose the separation of economic and political power. Since human rights are assumed from the beginning to be limited to the political sphere and civil society, framing the economic sphere as a sphere of 'norm free sociality' but not governing it, corporate rights will continue to govern the economic sphere. In governing the economic sphere, however, they bring under their control the fundamental means of life and self-determination, and thus undermine the value of the human rights permitted in the political and civil spheres of social life. 'Liberal democracy' as Wood again notes, "leaves untouched the whole sphere of domination and coercion created by capitalism; its relocation of substantial powers from the state to civil society [economic system], to private property and the compulsions of the market. It leaves untouched vast areas of our daily lives in the workplace, in the distribution of labor and resources, which are not subject to democratic accountability ... but are governed by the imperatives of profit maximization." Since it is the formal separation of political power from economic power that allows the life-blind value system of the globalized capitalist economy to undermine the material conditions of democracy, it follows that struggle for democratization today must directly challenge that formal separation.

No democratic theory which refuses to directly challenge the 'self-regulating logic' of the globalized economy can orient democratic movements in the right direction today. The right direction is not immediate 'revolutionary transformation' but gradual but radical subordination of the production, distribution, and use of life-resources to the needs-ground of social morality and a life-grounded value system. The consequence of not challenging the formal separation of political and economic power is the further subordination and degradation of life and life's conditions to the globalized economy. The value system that governs that economy cannot, as argued above, distinguish between its interests in self-expansion and the interests of people in securing the material conditions of their own free existence. 'Good' is whatever makes a profit, the consequences for people and other life forms are simply assumed to be good as a necessary entailment. Clearly, however, the conditions of human and planetary life under globalization refute the validity of this deduction. Indeed the dynamics that drive capitalist globalization are essentially 'biocidal.'

5. The Biocidal Essence of Capitalist Globalization

As noted briefly in the first section, the capitalist economy is unique in so far as it is driven by an internal expansionary dynamic. Thus it is true to say that capitalism has

always been a global system in so far as it necessarily pushes beyond local and national boundaries. ‘Globalization’ however refers to a phenomenon of the last thirty years and is typified by policies designed to reprogram national economies to serve the international economy. Hence globalization in my usage refers to the conscious decoupling of national economic systems from even the pretence of serving the citizens of different nations. Instead national economies become mere nodes in the international circulation of capital in the service of the interest of major multinational corporations and financial institutions. Since this new phase of capitalist expansion is driven by the life-blind system-value of bringing all natural and social wealth under the control of multinational corporations which have no commitment to the health and well-being of planetary life it can be called, without hyperbole, biocidal.

To be biocidal a value system does not have to hunt down and kill life in its individual manifestations in every instance. Instead, a biocidal value system is defined as a system in which the value of life is reduced to an instrumental function of the growth of the system itself. Since life is free in its nature—self-organizing, self-developing, and self-unfolding—to be made the instrument of a non-living system is in a real, and not just metaphorical sense, to be destroyed as a life-form. Living things are not simply mechanical parts of a universal machine. Unlike mechanical parts, whose essence is their fungibility, living things have value in their own right as spontaneously active individuals. When that spontaneity is negated they are reduced to mere machine parts and, in so far as they are made like machine parts, they lose the essential characteristic that distinguishes them from non-living things. Capitalist globalization depends for its expansion on the ever more extensive reduction of living things to mere ‘natural’ and ‘human’ resources, i.e., to fungible factors of production. Its essential drive, therefore, negates the spontaneity of life, reduces living things to parts of the universal economic machine, and is thus properly and without hyperbole called ‘biocidal.’

Since globalization is a development of capitalism, one might expect that the same relationship which held between the life-blind value system of early liberal-capitalist society and the classical liberal rights-ground of social morality will be duplicated at the international level today. Indeed, one finds a precise analogue. Whereas classical liberalism relied for its legitimation upon exclusive private property rights globalized capitalism relies for its legitimation upon a corporate rights ground of social morality. The corporate rights ground is institutionalized in trade agreements, patent and intellectual property law, international monetary charters and agreements and so forth, all of which have this point in common: they serve to open up the natural and social wealth of every nation and region to appropriation and commodification under the control of major multinational corporations. As David McNally argues, “an extensive international survey of more than one thousand changes between 1991 and 1999 to laws on foreign investment revealed that 94 per cent of these changes increased the rights and freedoms of foreign capitalists. The “free” movement of capital—anywhere, anytime, according to rules of its own making—is the real secret of the globalization agenda.” The corporate rights grounds, like its classical liberal predecessor, is thus the normative ground according to which the negation of essential life-value—spontaneous activity—is justified. Corporations have a right to exploit the resources that they control as they see fit. When their property includes non-human and human life, they have the right to use it according to the most profitable investment strategy.

Hence, to the extent that a democratic society requires collective control over the material conditions of need-satisfaction and capacity development it is radically incompatible with the globalization of capitalist resources. Globalization duplicates the formal separation of economic from political power on the international scale. Within their national economies citizens were already impeded from exercising democratic control over the economic system. With national economic policy increasingly a function of international dynamics and corporate decisions the majority of the world's people confront an even deeper impediment to democratization. Even if a national government willing to challenge the separation of economic and political power could be elected, it would confront the reality that the levers of economic power are now in the hands of corporations whose international scope gives them tremendous power to determine national economic policy, regardless of the platform of the party in power. The final section will suggest potential avenues of democratic development. Here it is necessary to spell out clearly the implications of globalization for human freedom in all of its major dimensions.

The essential implication for human freedom is that its material conditions are undermined to the precise extent that the corporate rights ground succeeds in securing control over life-sustaining and capacity-developing resources. This relationship is necessary and not contingent, a direct result of the principle that steers decision-making in the global economy. That principle is stated succinctly by McMurtry. Every decision in the globalized economy is made so as to “acquire ever more money demand without accountability to life-protective law and persisting at any cost to human and planetary life security.” I will now spell out how this principle systematically undermines the material conditions of human freedom and democracy at every major level of life-requirement.

5.1. The Biological Foundations of Life

As I noted above, at its most basic level freedom is an expression of the self-organizing, self-differentiating and self-unfolding nature of life itself. As Murray Bookchin argues, “life ... is not a passive lump of “stuff,” a form of metabolic matter that awaits the action of forces external to it... [it is] always striving and always producing new life forms ... life is self-directive in its own evolutionary development.” Hence to be made the mere instrument of non-living forces is to be, in a real sense, destroyed as a life-form, i.e., a self-directing organic whole. What Pat Roy Mooney has incisively named the “new enclosure movement” represented by the genetics industry threatens the spontaneity of life in its very foundations. The goal of the genetics industry, whether in the form of the human genome project or genetically modified organisms, is to supplant the spontaneous order of living matter with the calculating control of life-blind corporate programming. Its logical extension is the deliberate construction of life forms whose sole function would be service to various multinational industries. This intensifying drive for corporate control over the biological foundations of life itself expresses the biocidal drive of the corporate value system and rights-ground of social morality at its most basic. Whereas original liberal rights extended only to the means of existence, the new corporate rights-ground claims for itself the ancient prerogative of the gods: the right and power to control the nature of existence itself. This conclusion is neither

hyperbole nor tendentious. It can be confirmed by examining the actual state of genetic research and the interests of its corporate backers.

5.2. The Fundamental Means of Life Maintenance: Water and Food

While the new enclosure movement seeks to appropriate for its own use the genetic foundations of life, the old enclosure movement continues apace in the non-industrialized, non-white world. Some of the most important battles against biocidal globalization are being waged by indigenous peoples struggling heroically to maintain life-grounded community control over their lands, their waters, and their lifeways. From the Innu of Labrador resisting the terror of low-flying NATO jets destroying the caribou migrations on which they depend to the Ogoni of the Niger delta protecting their lands from western oil companies, from the decade long-struggle of the Zapatistas in Chiapas to the recent battles of the indigenous population of Bolivia to reclaim their water from the Bechtel corporation, the world's most non-destructive cultures reveal by their struggles the life-blind essence of the force they must combat to survive. These indigenous cultures remind everyone that life ultimately depends on a non-destructive interchange with the living natural world; that food and water are not the inventions of natural science but the evolved living wealth of the planet. Wealth here is measured in terms of its contribution to the growth of life. This form of wealth is the opposite of corporate wealth. That form of wealth must negate living wealth by commodifying it. Once living wealth has been commodified, people who formerly were independent and free find themselves dependent on market dynamics for their survival. The freedom of life lived in direct interaction with the natural world is duly destroyed.

5.3. The Pedagogical and Cultural Means of Human Capacity Development

Life is free, self-differentiating and self-developing activity. The basic material conditions of free self-activity are constant connection with the material conditions of need-satisfaction. Human life is distinguished from other life, however, in being defined by the possibility of conscious individuation. The material conditions of the realization of that possibility go beyond the physical conditions of survival to include pedagogical and cultural conditions. The satisfaction of these conditions of human individuation depends—upon secure and adequate public funding for the multiple institutions through which this uniquely human need is met.

As Marx wrote, that which distinguishes the human life form is its capacity to “make [our] life-activity itself the object of [our] will and consciousness.” The realization of that capacity, however, presupposes that the affective and cognitive faculties that define consciousness have been cultivated in childhood and young adulthood. A consciousness that is starved of attention and stimulation, that receives no education or is programmed rather than educated, or that is manipulated through a one-sided exposure to a single ruling value system can never make its life-activity the object of its consciousness. Instead, its consciousness will have been made the object for the replication of the exclusionary value-system that has created it. By privatizing education and cultural institutions and by robbing parents of the free time necessary to interact and play with their children the biocidal program of globalization negates the potentiality of human beings to posit for themselves unique life projects. Again, while the human organism

may not be killed as a consequence of the privatization of education and culture, its distinguishing characteristic is negated, and consciousness is made an instrument of a non-living system.

The cultivation of the human capacities for reflection and unique individuation also requires, for its completion, a social world in which unique talents and insights are welcomed and where the economic system is governed by principles that ensure that the young will find meaningful ways of contributing back to the community which has educated them. Once again globalization actively attacks this material condition of human freedom. Rather than select for enterprises which create meaningful, life-affirming work, globalization has wiped out secure and interesting jobs at an historically unprecedented pace. Instead of cultivating the younger generation such that they can become free individuals actively committed to reproducing and improving the conditions of social life through their unique contributions, the young, even in the wealthiest parts of the globe are programmed to accept what the market decides as their necessary and inevitable future. The principle of hope and imagination is negated by the corporate reality principle: adapt or be selected out of society. Where social reality is not the conscious creation of human beings working together but a reified force determining human life for its own ends it is, in the most fundamental sense of the word, unfree. Once again, then, the normal operations of the global value program and its corporate rights ground of social morality attack rather than satisfy the conditions of human freedom.

5.4. The Political Means of Collective Self-Determination

The extent to which collectively produced wealth is utilized to secure the institutional conditions of free self-development is determined by the degree to which political institutions are willing to act against the private appropriation of social wealth. This factor is determined by the degree to which political institutions are governed by a life-grounded value system and the needs-ground of social morality. Democracy in the proper sense of the term cannot be measured simply by the formal freedoms spelled out in a constitution. Instead, it is a social system governed by a life-grounded value system and a needs-grounded social morality. Free political institutions are those in which the collective life-interests of the citizens are not only voiced, but actually rule. These interests cannot rule where economic and political powers are formally separated such that the corporate rights ground of social morality is successful in legitimating the privatization of universally needed resources. In other words, democratic political institutions do not define, but instead are a higher level articulation of, democratic social relations.

The problem with even the best liberal-democratic theories of democracy is that they tend to regard political discourse as a free-floating zone of self-determination. As shown above, Habermas' theory was a paradigm case of this problem. Human beings are not bodies on one side and minds on the other with only instrumental links connecting them. That is, need-satisfaction is not a mere instrumental conditions of full citizenship such that so long as minimal needs are satisfied and there are no formal limits to 'political participation' society can be regarded as being as free as it is reasonable to expect. Humans are social-organic beings, integral centers of consciousness and

activity. To be self-determining they must collectively decide how and what to produce, how it is to be distributed and appropriated, and how economic life as a whole is to be organized such that it selects for life-supportive and meaningful enterprises and occupations. Of course, such a project can only be conceived of as a multi-generational and gradual transformation of the present reality. The fact that a democratic society cannot be created in the span of a single life time in no way negates its necessity, however.

Even at the abstractly political level, however, one once again cannot fail to notice the antithetical relationship between globalization and even liberal-democracy. The most important tools of public power, the ability of governments to respond to collective demands for national economic policy to serve the collective life-interest are stripped from governments by international trade agreements. Increasingly all official political parties sing from the same song book. The song has no verses but only a chorus: we must act to make the nation internationally competitive. But if only one principle determines every decision, and the people themselves have had no say in formulating that principle, and it does not take their universal life-interests into account, and if no argument can budge governments of the day from service to this principle, then these institutions have no substantive democratic content. Such is the confidence of the class whose short-term interests are served by globalization that they freely concede its undemocratic implications. The Fraser Institute, Canada's leading right-wing think tank thus notes that "a trade agreement simply limits the extent to which a government can respond to its citizens." On even the most minimal definition of a democracy any restriction on the ability of governments to respond to the demands of its citizens is a limitation on democracy.

Thus, if human beings are, as Aristotle argued, political animals, globalization once again proves biocidal. Globalization spreads by taking more and more issues of public policy out of the legitimate sphere of control of citizens and governments. It thus negates the political nature of human beings to the extent that it makes their collective deliberations meaningless in the formulation of public policy. Should elements of the civic collective resist they will be met with authoritarian violence and totalitarian roll-backs to hard won civil and political rights. But even where those rights are enforced society remains undemocratic to the extent that its vital organs of political decision-making become programmed functions of the globalized market system.

5.5. The Temporal Conditions of Free Self-realization

If human freedom requires publicly funded but intellectually independent cultural and pedagogical institutions, and those institutions presuppose political institutions which not only listen to but are governed by the expressed life-grounded interests of citizens, both presuppose that citizens have the time to actively engage in both. Time, however, is not simply an instrumental condition of political and cultural activity. For a finite mortal being free time (time whose use is not determined by any external, coercive force or power) is itself a fundamental condition of freedom. Indeed, once the means of life have been secured time under one's own conscious control is arguably the most important condition of human freedom. The nature of all things is specified by their limits, but only human beings are conscious of their mortality and thus also of the finite

frame in which they act. For an active, potentially free being, the value of mortal existence can only be measured by the character of the activities which it is able to pursue over the course of a life-time. The more comprehensive a range of activities and the depth to which they contribute to the well-being of others the more valuable a life is. For a free human being the essential problem of life is how to distribute one's various energies and capacities over the limited time of a life span. In our contemporary situation, however, free time is increasingly appropriated by the dynamics of the globalized market.

The value system of the globalized market does not understand time as a fundamental condition of a free existence. On the contrary, time is reduced to a measurable quantity whose metric is the production or expenditure of money. The production process is scientifically analyzed into its constituent functions and human activity reconstructed to ensure the maximal quantity of labor in the minimal amount of time. Time outside of work is normally to be 'spent' consuming the products of the capitalist market in the form of determinate 'goods' or entertainment industry services. There is thus no 'free' time properly understood, i.e., time under the spontaneous control of an autonomous intelligence. Instead, every moment of life is a mere moment in the perpetual movement of the *machine infernale* of the globalized market. Ever new psychic spaces are conquered by ever new consumer technologies whose cumulative effect is a society-wide loss of capacity to think; that is, to reflect the natural and social order in mind and judge it according to the principles implicit in our being a rational and self-determining species.

The total management of time undermines the conditions for imagination, play, and non-instrumental affective human interaction. It imposes unbearable pressures to 'make a decision about your future' without ever reflecting upon the profound implications of being an organism that has the capacity to *decide* about its future. Life becomes literally clockwork: rise, go to work or look for work, rest, rise, go to work or look for work. Hyperconformity becomes the dominant psychological trait of people robbed of the time necessary to conceive of other social possibilities. Thus, once again, at this most fundamental level of being a living mortal human, globalization proves its biocidal essence. A potentially free being without the time to exercise its cognitive freedom, i.e., without time to imagine how its life *should* be, has ceased to be an autonomous life form and instead has been reduced to a machine function.

It is thus apparent that the global capitalist system converts life-needs—for the physical conditions of survival, for the educational and cultural conditions of self-development and self-creation, the political conditions of collective self-determination according to life-grounded principles, and the temporal conditions of free self-reflection and projection—into means for its own blind, meaningless self-expansion. Whereas, from a democratic and life-grounded perspective a society is free when it devotes its resources to satisfying the needs and developing the capacities of its citizens, from the perspective of the value system and corporate rights ground of social morality of the globalized market society is free when it has dismantled all of its public institutions and allowed their resources to be converted into factors of the production of profit. These two forms of freedom are incompatible, for the growth of one can only come at the expense of the other. If one means by 'democracy' collective self-determination, and the beings that

are collectively determining themselves are living human beings, then democracy can only be understood according to a life-grounded value system and institutionalized through the needs ground of social morality. A merely ‘political’ or liberal democracy leaves the material conditions of self-determination outside of the collective control of citizens and is thus in contradiction with itself. To conclude this essay I will examine the underlying principles that define the contours of a possible democratic society.

6. Life-Grounded Democracy

Building a democratic alternative to the present world-machine presupposes that we begin from the objective and universal interests of humans as organic living beings. To insist on this starting point is neither arbitrary nor dogmatic. Cultural differences are no doubt real, and human beings cannot be understood without cultural differences being comprehended. These differences are not, however, absolute given and fixed realities but are collective products of interacting human beings capable, ultimately, of changing the terms of their interaction. The essential political question about different cultures does not concern the meaning of its defining symbols, but in whose interests those meanings are interpreted and whose interests are excluded by the dominant system of rule. Since life blind systems of value cross cultural differences life grounded responses emerge in widely divergent cultures, not as the product of Eurocentric cultural imperialism, but from the reflective intelligence of local populations defining a struggle for the satisfaction of their needs and the realization of their capacities against conservative defenders of a exclusionary interpretation of cultural tradition. Hence, beneath the unique systems of cultural meaning there is an underlying human form of the good against which, not the symbolic meanings of a culture, but its system of rule must be judged. That underlying human good is the integral satisfaction of human needs for the sake of creating the conditions for the free realization of the defining creative capacities of human individuals. The human good can only be fully realized, then, when the shared life interests of people form the effective governing principles of local, national, and global institutions.

The ultimate goal of a democratic society is not the writing of a constitution or the establishment of responsible government or the raising of everyone’s standard of living. Those goods are instrumental to the essential goal of ensuring that individual human beings are able to realize the defining potential of their subjecthood: the free development of their defining creative capacities. But the freedom of individuals is inconceivable outside of a free society. That is, individual freedom cannot be won in opposition to the institutional structure of society, but only through its gradual transformation. As life is individuated in its nature, life-grounded societies must by definition organize themselves for the sake of the good of individual life. As McMurtry argues, “production and distribution for life-need, and that, in turn, for life-capacity and experience in more comprehensive enjoyment and expression—this is the only *ultimate* value on earth. Any sane economy is there to serve it in opening horizons of life-worth.” Again, this principle cannot be immediately realized as the programmed outcome of a revolutionary cataclysm. Social complexity is a reality, grounded in the necessary interconnection of human beings and the deepening of its institutional mediations. Human interconnection, however, is also an opportunity for the growth of collective

intelligence. And it is the exercise of collective intelligence in alliance with needs-grounded struggle and life-grounded hopes that is the agent of democratization.

This agent is at work now in the forests of Brazil, where the Landless Workers Movement has occupied land and converted it, like the Diggers four centuries ago, into life-grounded use. It is at work in the disused factories of Argentina, where, workers made ‘surplus’ by IMF induced crisis have democratically reorganized production. It is at work in Canada, where people continue to fight for public health care against the life-blind drive towards privatization. It is at work in the young of the world who mobilize still against the darkening horizons of their future in a further commodified globe. It is at work amongst women who stand up for the control of their bodies and against patriarchal violence. It begins its work as soon as, and everywhere people awake to the life-ground within themselves which connects them one to another as needy and potentially free beings.

Glossary

Biocide:	The willful destruction of life as such, either directly, through overt killing or indirectly, by making of it a mere instrument to the growth of non-living systems.
Capability:	The general types of activity that distinguish organic life from inanimate things.
Capitalism:	An economic system based upon the private control of natural and social wealth and wage labor, governed by an imperative of constant and growing accumulation.
Democracy:	The practice of collective self-government and self-determination.
Globalization:	The process whereby formerly local and national societies are drawn into more extensive and intensive connections with each other.
Liberalism:	A political philosophy primarily concerned with the legitimacy of political power and emphasizing the priority of individual liberty over collective power.
Life-Ground:	the universal basis of all value, the maximal development of the capabilities of living things relative to their degree of organic and social complexity.
Need:	An objective requirement of continued organic existence and health.
Right:	An individual legal entitlement to pursue one’s private interests.
Social Morality:	The set of values governing the legitimacy of ways of producing, distributing, and appropriating resources.
Value System:	An interconnected network of goods and bads that determines the motivations of individual moral agents.

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Biographical Sketch

Jeff Noonan was born in 1968 in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada. He received his BA (Philosophy and Social and Political Thought) from York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada in 1991, his MA (Philosophy) and Ph. D (Philosophy) from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, in 1993 and 1996, respectively. He taught as a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Alberta from 1996-1998 and is currently Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, Canada. He also serves on the Coordinating Committee of the Centre for Social Justice, University of Windsor, the Academic Advisory Board of the Humanities Research Group, and the Coordinating Committee of the Labour Studies Program. He is the author of *Critical Humanism and the Politics of Difference* (McGill-Queen's University Press), 2003 (short-listed for the Canadian Philosophical Association's Book Prize, 2005) and more than twenty articles and reviews that have appeared in peer-reviewed journals such as *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, *ReThinking Marxism*, *Res Publica*, and *Social Theory and Practice*.